Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5940th meeting

Tuesday, 22 July 2008, 3.30 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Bui The Giang	(Viet Nam)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Kenes
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Zongo
	China	Mr. Sun Zhiqiang
	Costa Rica	Mr. Weisleder
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. Kassianides
	Indonesia	Mr. Mulyana
	Italy	Mr. Trambajolo
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Mubarak
	Panama	Mr. De Vengoechea
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	South Africa	Mr. Laher
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Bayley
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting resumed at 3.40 p.m.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I should like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Speakers with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in the Chamber and to deliver a condensed version when speaking.

I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Mr. Al-Allaf (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to sincerely congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month and to offer your predecessor our gratitude for his wise conduct of the work of the Council last month.

Jordan aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Arab Group and by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Today, Jordan would like to be the voice of logic and moderation before this august Council, as it always has been. After 60 years of conflict, it is neither possible nor acceptable to continue trading accusations, and it is neither possible nor acceptable for any party to claim a monopoly on the truth or to cast aspersions on the pivotal historic role that the Security Council has played regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. Millions of people in the Middle East still look to the Council with hope. They still believe in its ability to exercise its basic function, the maintenance of international peace and security, on the basis of objectivity, neutrality and justice. Once our people stop thinking in such terms, our ability to keep events under control will be seriously compromised.

Jordan, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Al Hussein, only accepts positive dealings between and within the parties with a view to attaining peace in the region in a manner that will preserve the historical rights of the Palestinians to establish a viable, contiguous, independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in conformity with resolutions of international legitimacy adopted by the Council and at the same time, preserving the security of Israel. That positive option is not an impossible dream, but a strategic vision that can be implemented. The Annapolis Conference touched on that issue when it formulated a time frame for realizing that objective by the end of 2008. Only five months remain for that. The real challenge that today faces us all is how to make use of the remaining months of this year to attain that objective.

Jordan believes that reaching and implementing a peace agreement between the Palestinians and Israelis will dramatically change current trends in the Middle East and will give an important opportunity to change the strategic situation in the region for years to come. Failure to reach an agreement will only st engthen the positions of the forces opposed to peace in the region. The realization of a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian question, the core of the conflict in the Middle East, is the key to solving other conflicts and will guarantee security and stability in the region. Consequently, the Israeli occupation must come to an end. There must be a just solution that realizes the aspirations of the Palestinian people to preserve their national identity through the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, while also ensuring security for the people of Israel.

Achieving the desired peace requires that all concerned parties go seriously to the negotiating table on a clear basis. That should be accompanied by sincere efforts by the international Powers and forces to encourage both parties, Palestinians and Israelis, to fulfil their commitments and to reach comprehensive solutions to all problems to be addressed in a final settlement. In that context, Jordan, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II, pursues efforts in all areas to mobilize international support to lend impetus to the negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis and to reach a peace agreement that will make possible the establishment of a Palestinian State before the end of this year, in accordance with what was agreed on at the Annapolis Conference and with the resolutions of international legitimacy, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative, which constitutes the basis for dealing with every aspect of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Success in the peace process requires that bridges of confidence and understanding be rebuilt and that there be real progress on the ground. Unilateral policies and the imposition of a de facto situation have failed in the past, and there is no reason to believe that such policies will enjoy any success in the future. Israeli plans to build new settlements in the occupied

Palestinian territories, especially in East Jerusalem, in addition to the expansion of existing settlements, are totally unacceptable and have been rejected. Those attempts to build a de facto situation constitute flagrant violations of international law and of Israel's obligations under the Road Map. They will also jeopardize the peace process and the future of the Palestinian State. The international community should intensify its efforts to urge Israel to put an immediate end to all settlement activities, including their natural growth. All people in the Middle East should look to the Security Council to assume its responsibility in putting an end to those plans.

The situation in Gaza is at its worst ever. We remain worried about the deteriorating humanitarian and living situation of our Palestinian brothers there. Jordan will pursue all possible efforts and contacts with all international and regional parties to urge them to work towards putting an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza and to provide the assistance that will help to improve their living conditions and put an end to the deterioration of the situation. The political negotiations required at this stage should result in immediate steps by Israel to alleviate the daily suffering of the Palestinian people, including by lifting the blockade and the closures, which have a devastating political, economic, social and psychological impact on the Palestinian people.

Jordan reiterates its full and constant support to the legitimate Palestinian leadership, represented by the Palestinian Authority and its President, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas. We stress the need for the international community to provide the support and assistance that Mr. Abbas and the Palestinians need in their efforts to establish a democratic political regime, strengthen the work of the Palestinian national institutions and build responsible, transparent institutions, including security institutions. The international community must contribute by supporting Mr. Abbas in reviving the Palestinian economy, improving the living conditions and the environment for investments and developing a free and prosperous economy. Palestinians are currently in a difficult situation and need support to establish an independent Palestinian State on their national soil.

In conclusion, putting an end to violence and achieving peace is not the responsibility of one party and not the other. In that respect, we totally reject the targeting and killing of innocent civilians on both sides, whether Palestinian or Israeli. Such acts are obstacles to the success of the peace process. They also foment violence, which leads to more hatred, killing, destruction and extremism. In that respect, we reiterate Jordan's support for the efforts of the regional and international parties to help the Palestinians and Israelis resume the negotiation process. We also recognize the importance of the role of the Quartet and its representative, Mr. Tony Blair, in crystallizing and implementing the message of peace that the peoples of the region expect from this Council.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Argüello (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Following the Annapolis summit of last November, the peace process between Israel and the Palestine Authority gained new impetus in defining the final goal of the peace process and the path that the parties should follow to reach it.

However, the expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, the policy of restriction on movement of Palestinians in the West Bank, the ongoing building of the wall of separation within the boundaries of the Green Line, the closure of the border crossings to Gaza, which has created an alarming humanitarian situation, and continuous Palestinian terrorist attacks in Jerusalem are impeding the trust that is necessary between the parties to reach a peace agreement.

The resolve of Israeli and Palestine Authority leaders to reach a possible peace agreement, which was demonstrated this month in Paris during the Union for the Mediterranean summit, gives us hope for the future. We remain convinced that a lasting peace cannot be achieved without negotiations between Israel, Syria and Lebanon. That is why we welcome the beginning of proximity peace talks between Syria and Israel under the auspices of Turkey.

At the same time, we welcome the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Syria and Lebanon. We also believe that another step forward is the Doha agreement, which facilitated the election of the Lebanese President and the establishment of a unity cabinet. All of that is necessary to ensure the authority of the Lebanese State over all its territory. That is why we stress compliance by all States of the region with the provisions of 1701 (2006), which establishes an

arms embargo on and the disarming of Lebanese militias.

The Argentine Republic will not tolerate the activities of terrorists or those who harbour them. We therefore call on the Special Tribunal for Lebanon to begin its work as soon as possible so as to ensure that the perpetrators of the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri do not go unpunished, because we believe that there can be no lasting peace without a foundation of justice.

We reiterate the commitment of the Argentine Government to a fair and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions, the reactivation of the regional dimension of the peace process, the elements of the road map and the new dynamism generated by the Annapolis Conference.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I would like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this timely open debate on the situation in the Middle East. We appreciate the fact that non-members of the Security Council are regularly afforded an opportunity to address that issue. My appreciation goes also to Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his comprehensive and informative briefing this morning.

Over the past few months, there have been positive developments in the Middle East. We welcome the continuing efforts to advance the Annapolis track. The international community should continue to support the efforts of the parties concerned to reach an agreement by the end of this year.

We highly appreciate the active diplomatic efforts that countries in the region have been making. As a result of such efforts, indirect peace talks between Israel and Syria have resumed under the auspices of Turkey, the Doha agreement was reached in May with the mediation of the relevant Arab countries, and a new cabinet was formed in Lebanon.

At the Hokkaido Toyako Summit, the leaders of the Group of Eight reiterated their commitment to realizing a comprehensive peace in the region. The Paris Summit for the Mediterranean also provided valuable support for the parties concerned.

The situation in the Middle East, however, remains fragile and much still needs to be done. We believe that progress on the Palestinian track, which is the core issue in the Middle East peace process, will lead to peace between Israel and its neighbours and eventually to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East as a whole.

A peace agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians should be achieved as soon as possible. We hope that peaceful coexistence and prosperity for the Israeli and the Palestinian people will thereby be realized. We call on all parties to make every effort to that end by showing maximum restraint and good faith in the bilateral negotiations, to refrain from any action that would undermine the negotiations and the momentum for peace, and to implement their road map obligations such as ending all acts of violence, terrorism and incitement. We reiterate the call on Israel to freeze all settlement activities and the construction of houses in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Japan welcomes the truce that took effect in Gaza recently through the mediation of Egypt and calls for it to be observed. At the same time, we remain concerned about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza. The integrity of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip should soon be restored under the leadership of President Abbas. We support the reform efforts of the Palestinian Authority, including the training of the security forces. In that connection, we call on Israel to take further steps to ensure movement and access.

On 2 July, Foreign Minister Koumura of Japan hosted the third round of the ministerial meeting of the Four-Party Consultative Unit for the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" initiative, with the participation of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Jordan and Japan. The four parties then issued a press statement welcoming the developments made so far and stating how they were looking forward to future progress.

The feasibility study on the agro-industrial park in Jericho will be completed in November and projects to develop basic infrastructure will move into the implementation stage as early as next year. We strongly believe that this initiative will help build confidence between the two sides by contributing to the creation of a viable Palestinian economy and will ultimately give Palestinian youth hope for a productive future.

Japan welcomes the formation of the new cabinet headed by Prime Minister Siniora. We hope that, under the leadership of President Sleiman, all parties concerned in Lebanon will continue to engage in

dialogue with a view to enhancing the stability and political independence of the country.

To achieve stability in Lebanon, it is essential that Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) be fully implemented. We therefore welcome the recent exchange of prisoners by Israel and Hizbollah as a step towards reducing tensions and building confidence, and extend our sincere condolences to the families of the deceased.

However, much remains to be done by parties in the region, including all Lebanese parties concerned and Israel, in order to achieve a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution. They must vigorously continue to disarm and disband all remaining militias, to delineate the borders of Lebanon, including the Shaba'a Farms, and to ensure that there is no illegal trafficking of weapons. We welcome the recent comment of President Assad that Syria is ready for the reciprocal establishment of embassies in Syria and Lebanon.

Japan decided recently to extend financial support to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. We hope that it will assist in the efforts to fulfil its intended goal.

In conclusion, Japan remains fully committed to providing all possible support in the hope of achieving progress in the peace process.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Paul Badji, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

I express to you, Sir, my most heartfelt congratulations on your outstanding presidency of the Security Council for this month of July 2008. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to all Council members for having allowed me to participate, on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in this public debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

Almost eight months after the Annapolis Conference, the holding and outcome of which were welcomed by our Committee, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, still remains grim. However, the Committee did not hesitate to give its full support to that initiative, which was aimed at obtaining agreement by the parties on final status by the end of this year. Accordingly, the Committee's programme of work for the current year, 2008, is geared towards supporting the creation of a climate conducive to the advancement of permanent status negotiations between the parties, including, particularly, the complete cessation of all acts of violence.

That positive dynamic was echoed by the participants in the three international meetings that our Committee has organized in recent months: the Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, held in February in Amman, Jordan; the United Nations International Conference on Palestine Refugees, held in April at UNESCO headquarters in Paris; and the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held in June in Malta.

As a prerequisite for successful negotiations between Israel and Palestine, tangible changes must occur on the ground in accordance with the parties' obligations under the first phase of the Quartet's Road Map. Our Committee is seriously concerned over Israel's ongoing settlement policy, which contradicts all of the obligations set forth in the Road Map. The very presence of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories is a violation of international law. The expansion and consolidation of large settlements in and around Jerusalem, especially in the E-1 area, raises serious doubts about Israel's good faith in these negotiations.

In fact, since the Annapolis Conference, the Israeli authorities have announced plans to build more than 3,000 apartments in and around Jerusalem, and the construction of some 300 new buildings has already begun, according to reports of the Israeli non-governmental organization Peace Now. These settlement blocks, together with the wall being built by Israel, sever Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, which it cuts into two parts, thus forming an enormous challenge to the permanent status negotiations.

The Committee calls upon Israel to immediately cease all settlement activity and to dismantle settlement outposts. Four years after the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice declaring the separation wall illegal under international law and insisting on its removal, Israel stubbornly continues construction of the wall on Palestinian land. The Committee calls upon the international community, and the Council in particular, to take more serious action to

challenge the presence of the wall in the occupied Palestinian territory.

With regard to Jerusalem, it is the Committee's position that a negotiated solution based on international law is critical for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and for establishing lasting peace in the entire region. No agreement that does not include East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian State can help bring about a sustained settlement to the conflict.

Israel's ongoing settlement activity in Jerusalem and the discriminatory measures taken against Palestinian residents of the city are in clear violation of resolution 252 (1968), which stated that

> "all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, including expropriation of land and properties thereon, which tend to change to change the legal status of Jerusalem are invalid and cannot change that status". (*para. 2*)

Our Committee welcomes the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, which went into effect last month. The parties must do their utmost to respect the ceasefire and it should be extended to the West Bank without delay.

The humanitarian situation remains critical. The crossings into Gaza are not opened frequently enough to provide the minimum basic necessities to the population. The Committee reiterates that Israel, as the occupying Power, is obligated under the Fourth Geneva Convention to protect civilians under its occupation and is responsible for providing basic services such as food and medical care and for ensuring the overall welfare of the population. The applicability of the Convention to the occupied Palestinian territory has been repeatedly confirmed by the Conference of High Contracting Parties, the General Assembly and the Security Council.

The Gaza Strip is no exception, with Israel fully controlling every aspect of the daily life of the population. Through me, the Committee again urges the Council to take robust, urgent action to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to meet its responsibilities as guardian of international peace and security by upholding its own resolutions, which continue to be flouted by Israel: resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Ali (Malaysia): Mr. President, my delegation wishes to express its appreciation to you for having convened this meeting, which gives the opportunity for many of us not represented on this body to address the Council on an issue of grave importance which affects the state of international peace and security. In this regard, my delegation aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We should recall that June this year marked the sixtieth year of the dispossession of Palestine refugees. Last year was the commemoration of the fortieth year of the occupation of the Palestinian territories, which is on record as the longest occupation in modern history. In view of that background, there is an unmistakable and pervasive view among many developing countries that certain members of the Council have been selective in their approach in tackling issues relating to international peace and security. The Security Council has adopted various resolutions on the situation in the Middle East, particularly resolutions 242 (1967) 338 (1973). The lack of action on the part of the Council to enforce those resolutions bears negatively on the credibility of this body.

My delegation recognizes the significance of recent developments, including the Gaza truce and last week's prisoner exchange. We hope that those developments will contribute to the Middle East peace process, in which the Palestine-Israel conflict represents the core issue. Last November, Malaysia was among those present in Annapolis that shared a sense of optimism that some progress was possible towards a solution to the conflict. Developments since then, however, have dashed that optimism. It is indeed difficult to maintain the hope that we are nearer to realizing the vision of a viable, territorially contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel.

In particular, my delegation wishes to highlight the fact that the ongoing expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, despite the undertakings that Israel has made, including in Annapolis, is a major impediment to the peace process. The Council simply cannot stand by idle, for doing so would amount to condoning and abetting the Israeli confiscation of Palestinian territories. To prod the

Middle East peace process in the right direction, the Security Council must ensure that Israel complies with the Council's resolutions.

It is not possible to equate the responsibilities of Palestinians and Israelis for achieving a solution to the problem. Israel is the occupier. Israel bears responsibility as the occupying Power under international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. The time is long overdue for Israel to cease its policy of imposing collective punishment on the population of Gaza. Israel should halt all its human rights violations and illegal actions and respect international law. In that connection, I wish to recall the words contained in Israel's Declaration of Independence, which lays out the moral foundation of the State:

> "We extend our hand to all neighbouring States and their peoples in an offer of peace and good-neighborliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East."

In 2002, the Arab countries, through the Arab League's peace proposal, offered peace and normal relations with Israel in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, its acceptance of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and its agreement to a just solution of the Palestinian refugee problem. That is in line with Security Council resolution 242 (1967), yet Israel has not grasped that offer for peace.

This time, the international community must ensure that the present peace efforts do not fail. The consequences of an unravelling of the peace process would be devastating, the prospects for peacemaking in the future would dim, and the region would sink into further turmoil.

Ultimately, the current peace efforts should bring an end to the occupation of all the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967 — the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan — and lead to the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as a just solution to the question of the refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). That will be possible only if the Security Council implements its resolution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Sadeghi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to join other speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your able stewardship of the Council's work this month and in thanking you for having convened this open debate in order to address the grave situation in the Middle East and the unspeakable plight of the Palestinian people. I also avail myself of this opportunity to thank Mr. Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for briefing the Security Council on the subject matter before us today.

In the period under review, as on every other day in the past six decades, the Palestinian people were subjected to the daily brutalities of the Israeli regime, which has continued to systematically violate the Palestinians' most basic, legitimate and inalienable rights. While the Israeli regime hypocritically speaks of peace, in practice it has persisted in and even increased its abhorrent crimes against the innocent Palestinians and others in the region. As realities on the ground abundantly suggest, its systematic pattern of human rights violations and massive breaches of international law and international humanitarian law have continued unabated.

The continuation of military operations against Palestinian civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly the most recent inhumane and criminal Israeli acts against schools, medical centres and other civilian institutions in the West Bank, and the imposition of a humanitarian crisis on the entire population of the Gaza Strip through closures and restrictions on movement and access of persons and goods, even humanitarian and medical necessities, have once again highlighted the gross violation of the most basic human rights and the fundamental principles of international law by the Israeli regime. During the period under review and as a consequence of the Israeli military campaign, the human and material losses inflicted on the Palestinian people continued to rise. A case in point is the continuation of the brutal blockade of the Gaza Strip that has made the lives of the innocent Palestinians living there unbearable.

Four years have passed since the International Court of Justice rendered its Advisory Opinion on the

legal consequences of the construction of the illegal separation wall in the Palestinian territories. The construction of the unlawful separation wall is not only an illegal act with dire consequences for the Palestinian people, but is also a clear indication of the aggressive, racist and expansionist policies adopted and pursued by the Israeli regime. Despite the unambiguous opposition of the international community to the construction of the illegal wall, the Israeli regime has continued and even expanded the construction of the wall with full impunity. It has indeed added to the suffering and difficult plight of the Palestinian people, who, at the same time, have been suffering and continue to suffer from other Israeli atrocities, such as appalling massacres, extrajudicial killings, home demolitions and other atrocious crimes.

Instead of heeding the international community's calls to terminate such illegal acts, the said regime has continued the construction of the wall, entailing, inter alia, violations of the freedom of movement of the Palestinian people and of their rights to work, worship, health care, education and adequate living standards. It has also forced the eviction of Palestinian civilians from their homes and lands, which has in turn shattered many families.

The international community must hold the Israeli regime accountable for its illegal and criminal actions in the occupied Palestinian territories. As the International Court of Justice also demanded in its Advisory Opinion, that regime must terminate its breaches of international law, cease forthwith the construction of the wall, immediately dismantle the structure, repeal and render ineffective forthwith all legislative and regulatory acts relating thereto, and make reparations for all the damages that the apartheid wall has caused.

In violation of numerous United Nations resolutions and despite repeated calls made by various United Nations organs and agencies, the construction of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories has continued and expanded. That serves as yet another indication that the Israeli regime's words about peace with the Palestinians are deceitful and of no validity. It was unfortunate that certain members permanently seated in the Security Council, by threatening to use their veto, did not allow to proceed the initiative of the Arab Group to submit a draft resolution to the Council condemning that illegal act. The Council should fulfil its Charter-based mandate by taking action against the Israeli regime to compel it immediately to cease all its settlement activities and to dismantle the settlement outposts.

We commend the people of Lebanon for their efforts to bring about national unity and reconciliation. We welcome the election of Mr. Michel Sleiman as President of Lebanon and the formation of a national unity Government. Together with others in the region, we have spared no efforts to encourage all the Lebanese and to help them make these remarkable achievements possible.

While the Israeli war machine is relentlessly at work shattering the lives and livelihoods of Palestinians, the Israeli regime persists in its aggressive policies towards Lebanon — and against others in the region too. It continues to occupy the Syrian Golan Heights and parts of Lebanese territory. That regime is also violating Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), particularly through violations of Lebanese airspace. According to paragraph 10 of the most recent report of the Secretary General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2008/425), Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace have increased to an "unprecedented" level. This is another example of the Israeli regime's contempt for the Security Council and for its decisions.

The Security Council, as the organ of the United Nations with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should live up to its responsibilities by preventing the Israeli regime from continuing to commit these atrocities and flout the will of the international community, as embodied in numerous United Nations resolutions. Regrettably, the Council has thus far failed to take any serious and tangible action in this regard due to the unconditional support extended to the Israeli regime by a permanent member of the Council. That support cannot but be regarded as explicit support for the war crimes and unlawful activities persistently pursued by the Israeli regime.

The representative of the Israeli regime made some baseless and unworthy allegations and distortions against my country during today's meeting. I wish to place on record that my delegation rejects those absurd allegations and distortions. No one needs to be reminded that these are tired and well-known practices by that regime and its representatives, intended to distract the international community's attention from

the horrendous crimes committed by the Israeli regime on a daily basis against the people under its occupation. Nor does anyone need to be reminded — including, let there be no illusion, the representative of the Israeli regime as well — that that regime has inflicted upon mankind only bloodshed, State terrorism, aggression, occupation and crimes against humanity. There is no doubt that the regime's wicked behaviour and policies, coupled with its clandestine nuclear arsenal, have made it the most serious and immediate threat that the civilized world is facing today.

Before concluding, I wish to draw attention to the issue of the Iranian diplomats and the Iranian journalist who were abducted 26 years ago this month by an Israeli-sponsored paramilitary group in Lebanon during the Israeli occupation of that country. As we have already communicated through the Secretary-General, on 5 July 1982, during the invasion of Lebanon and the occupation of Beirut by the Israeli regime, three members of the staff of the embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Beirut, as well as an Iranian journalist, were abducted in Lebanon while returning in a diplomatic vehicle from Syria to the embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in west Beirut. There are various news reports and numerous signs indicating clearly that those Iranian officials were immediately handed over to the Israeli military forces after their abduction, as Beirut was occupied by the Israeli forces at the time. The reports further indicate that the abducted Iranian officials were subsequently taken to Israeli prisons and since then have been held in captivity by the Israeli regime. This illegal and inhumane act runs against the most fundamental international rules and principles, and also contravenes numerous United Nations resolutions.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is of the strong view that the Israeli regime is responsible for those abductions and for the fate of the Iranian diplomats and the journalist. We call on the Security Council to take appropriate action to help secure their release and their safe return home many years after their illegal abduction and detention.

The President: There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.